

***Amendments to the Claims***

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

1.     *(Currently amended)* A method for processing credit transactions, comprising:  
          storing a predetermined threshold ratio of disputed credit transactions to total credit transactions for a period of time;  
          identifying, using a computer-based system, a merchant with a disputed credit transaction in the period of time;  
          determining, using the computer-based system, a number of the disputed credit transactions and a number of credit transactions involving the merchant in the period of time;  
          determining, using the computer-based system, a ratio of the number of disputed credit transactions to the number of credit transactions for the merchant; and  
          assessing, using the computer-based system, a fee against the merchant for each disputed transaction involving the merchant that exceeds the predetermined threshold ratio, when the merchant's ratio is at least equal to the predetermined threshold ratio; ~~and~~  
          ~~promoting cost avoidance in resolving the disputed credit transactions,~~  
          wherein the predetermined threshold ratio is set based on, at least, a first factor comprising a transaction value amount of each of the disputed credit transactions of the merchant.
2.     *(Previously presented)* The method of claim 1, wherein the period of time comprises thirty days.
3.     *(Currently amended)* The method of claim 1, wherein the predetermined threshold ratio comprises a second factor of three percent.
4.     *(Currently amended)* The method of claim 1, further comprising:  
          establishing the predetermined threshold ratio based on a second factor comprising an industry category including the merchant.

5.     *(Previously presented)* The method of claim 4, wherein the industry category comprises a standard industrial classification code.
6.     *(Currently amended)* The method of claim 1, further comprising:  
          establishing the predetermined threshold ratio based on a second factor comprising an average transaction volume of the merchant.
7.     *(Currently amended)* The method of claim 1, further comprising:  
          storing a threshold number of time periods in which the ratio of disputed credit transactions to total credit transactions may exceed the predetermined threshold ratio;  
          determining a number of time periods in which the ratio of the number of disputed credit transactions to the number of credit transactions for the merchant is at least equal to the predetermined threshold value; and said assessing further comprising:  
          assessing the fee against the merchant for each disputed transaction that exceeds the predetermined threshold ratio, when the ratio is at least equal to the predetermined threshold ratio for the period of time and the number of time periods for the merchant is at least equal to the threshold number of time periods.
8.     *(Original)*     The method of claim 7, wherein the threshold number of time periods is greater than one.
9.     *(Previously presented)* The method of claim 8, further comprising, before the assessing:  
          generating a notice for transmission to the merchant when the number of time periods for the merchant is greater than zero and less than the threshold number of time periods, the notice including: the ratio of the number of disputed credit transactions to the number of credit transactions for the merchant, the predetermined threshold ratio, the number of time periods for the merchant and the threshold number of time periods.

10.    (*Original*)     The method of claim 9, further comprising:  
          transmitting the notice to the merchant.
  
11.    (*Original*)     The method of claim 8, further comprising:  
          generating a notice for transmission to the merchant when the number of time periods for the merchant is greater than zero and less than the threshold number of time periods, the notice including at least proposed business solution for reducing the number of disputed credit transactions involving the merchant.
  
12.    (*Original*)     The method of claim 7, wherein the threshold number of time periods is based on an industry category including the merchant.
  
13.    (*Previously presented*) The method of claim 7, wherein the threshold number of time periods comprises a threshold number of consecutive time periods.
  
14.    (*Currently amended*) A method for processing credit transactions, comprising:  
          calculating, using a computer-based system, a ratio of disputed credit transactions to total credit transactions for each of a plurality of industry categories for a previous period of time;  
          determining, using the computer-based system, a first threshold ratio for a first of the industry categories based on a first factor comprising said calculating;  
          determining a second threshold ratio, lower than the first threshold ratio, for a second of the industry categories based on the first factor, the second of the industry categories having a lower ratio of disputed credit transaction to total credit transactions in the previous period of time than the first of the industry categories;  
          determining a ratio of disputed credit transactions to total credit transactions for a merchant in the first of the industry categories; and  
          assessing a fee when the ratio of disputed credit transactions to total credit transactions is at least equal to the first threshold ratio; ~~and~~  
          ~~promoting cost avoidance in resolving the disputed credit transactions,~~

wherein the first and second threshold ratios are set based on, at least, a second factor comprising a transaction value amount of each of the disputed credit transactions of the merchant.

15.     *(Cancelled)*

16.     *(Previously presented)* The method of claim 14, wherein the fee is assessed for each disputed credit transaction that exceeds the first threshold ratio.

17.     *(Previously presented)* The method of claim 14, further comprising:

          determining a first threshold number of time periods in which the ratio of disputed credit transactions to total credit transactions for a merchant in the first of the industry categories exceeds the first threshold ratio, based on said calculating; and

          determining a second threshold number of time periods, lower than the first threshold number of time periods, in which the ratio of disputed credit transactions to total credit transactions for a merchant in the second of the industry categories may exceed the second threshold ratio, based on said calculating.

18.     *(Previously presented)* The method of claim 17, further comprising:

          determining a ratio of disputed credit transactions to total credit transactions for the merchant for a plurality of previous time periods;

          determining a number of time periods in which the ratio of disputed credit transactions to total credit transactions of the merchant is greater than the first threshold ratio; and

          assessing a fee if the merchant's current ratio of disputed credit transactions to total credit transactions is at least equal to the first threshold ratio and the number of time periods for the merchant is at least equal to the first threshold number of time periods.

19. (*Previously presented*) The method of claim 18, further comprising:

generating a notice for transmission to the merchant when the merchant's current ratio of disputed credit transactions to total credit transactions is at least equal to the first threshold ratio and the number of time periods for the merchant is less than the first threshold number of time periods, including a predetermined period of time in which the merchant must lower their ratio of disputed credit transactions to total credit transactions to avoid fees.

20. (*Currently amended*) An apparatus for processing credit transactions, comprising:  
a processor;

a memory operative with the processor to store and retrieve a sequence of processing instructions that enable the processor to:

determine an average ratio of disputed credit transactions to total credit transactions for each of a plurality of industry categories;

generate a threshold ratio of disputed credit transactions to total credit transactions for a first of the industry categories based on, ~~it's at least, a first~~ factor comprising an ~~automatedly~~ automatically determined average ratio of disputed credit transactions to total credit transactions and a second factor based on a transaction value amount of each of the disputed credit transactions of the merchant;

determine a ratio of disputed credit transactions to total credit transactions ratio for a merchant in the first of the industry categories; and

assess a fee to the merchant when the merchant's ratio of disputed credit transactions to total credit transactions is greater than the threshold ratio of disputed credit transactions to total credit transactions, the fee applied to each disputed transaction involving the merchant that causes the merchant to exceed the threshold ratio of disputed credit transactions to total credit transactions;

~~promote cost avoidance in resolving the disputed credit transactions.~~

21. (*New*) The method of claim 1, wherein the predetermined threshold ratio is lower for higher value transactions.

22. (New) The method of claim 14, wherein the first and second threshold ratios are lower for higher value transactions.
23. (New) The apparatus of claim 20, wherein the threshold ratio is lower for higher value transactions.